



Exposing an Indian pharma firm fuelling West Africa's opioid crisis



An Indian pharmaceutical company is manufacturing unlicensed, highly addictive opioids and exporting them illegally to West Africa where they are driving a major public

Aveo Pharmaceuticals, based in Mumbai, makes a range of pills that go under different brand names and are packaged to look like legitimate medicines. But all contain the same harmful mix of ingredients: tapentadol, a powerful opioid, and carisoprodol, a muscle relaxant so addictive it's banned in Europe.

his combination of drugs is not licensed for use anywhere in the world and can cause breathing difficulties and seizures. An overdose can kill. Despite the risks, these opioids are popular as street drugs in many West African countries, because they are so cheap and widely available.

Having traced the drugs back to Aveo's factory in India, the an undercover operative inside the factory, posing as an African businessman looking to supply opioids to Nigeria. Using a hidden camera, the filmed one of Aveo's directors, Vinod Sharma, showing off the same dangerous products the found for sale across West Africa.

The drugs consume the sanity of those who abuse them," says Maham, "like a fire burns when kerosene is poured on it." One addict in Tamale put it even more simply. The drugs, he said, have "wasted our lives".